

JOHN EDWARDS: A HELPING HAND FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AND THE RESERVES

Today, Senator Edwards proposes two measures to honor the men and women who serve in the National Guard and the Reserves — including over 3,300 North Carolinians on active duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, or homeland defense operations.

Offering child care to families with one parent at war. Senator Edwards proposes a new national fund to meet the urgent child care needs of families with one member deployed on active duty. Today, families of deployed soldiers are eligible for child care programs at or near a military installation. But many of those programs are full, and many families live far away and can't afford to pay for child care themselves. For example, if a family member is in the National Guard's 505th Engineer Battalion Company in North Wilkesboro, the nearest Army base with child care is 173 miles away. When one family member takes a pay cut and goes to war, that family may face a severe child care problem. The Edwards proposal would offer grants for child care in the community to families with child care needs due to deployment.

Lifting the heavy burden of debt from soldiers on the frontlines. Senator Edwards proposes waiving interest on student loans for soldiers deployed on active duty. Nearly one-quarter of guardsmen and reservists are college students, and many more are recent graduates. Because interest still accrues during service, many Guardsmen and Reservists return home to heavy debt. On an average loan of \$17,000, as much as \$1,400 in interest can accrue during a year's service. Edwards would eliminate these interest charges. In addition, he would make permanent the temporary policy relieving students from financial penalties if they withdraw from school because they are mobilized.

Senator Edwards has fought for guardsmen, reservists and their families. He has supported measures to:

- **Provide full health coverage for Guard and Reserve soldiers and their families** through the same TRICARE program that is available to full-time active duty soldiers and their families. Currently, 20 percent of Guard and Reserve families lack health insurance. This proposal failed in the Senate by a narrow margin.
- **Increase imminent danger pay for guardsmen and reserves on active duty** by \$100 per month, and increase the family separation allowance by \$150 per month. This proposal passed the Senate.
- **Improve the veterans health system.** Just this week, Senator Edwards cosponsored a measure to add \$375 million for Veterans Administration health programs that are available to many guardsman and reservists. The Senate added \$155 million.